he told himself. An unfortunate poor bastard of a slave. Drugged, tortured, mind-washed, James Kirk was dead, the self that made the man, and only this poor shell remained.

To the interested encouragement of the crowd, the elder had bound the slave face down on the bed, his hands linked behind him, his knees spread wide and hips upthrust as the Romulan probed his ass with two fingers of one hand and milked his cock with the other. Caught between two torments, or two ecstasies, the slave was thrusting raggedly back and forth. McCoy felt a flush of fever in his own groin that the Romulan must have shared. With an oath he stopped the stimulation and grabbed his own cock.

"Don't stop now, old man. Win him for us and we'll share your victory with you."

With a frustrated growl the Romulan turned his victim so that he faced away from the audience. In a moment he had straddled him, facing the onlookers, and was roughly parting the buttocks to show them the dark rose of the oriface. Then he bent his head, green tongue beginning to lick down the cleft toward the balls dangling below.

The slave's white body was writhing and jerking in an extremity of arousal, and other bodies in the dark echoed his movement, but it was the Romulan who cursed and jerked upright and climaxed, his seed falling over the upthrust buttocks and quivering thighs.

Bawdy laughter mocked him as he got to his feet and shoved the slave off balance with his foot. Arain rolled to his side and stared up from his bonds, his cock still rampant between his thighs.

It can't be Jim, McCoy told himself, he would never submit to that--but the momentary blaze of triumph from the passionate face shook him. If he chose to wear chains--that was how James Kirk would wear them.

The attendants came forward again, offering wine, warm towels or their own warm mouths. McCoy's stomach clenched as he saw what was happening and he threw an alarmed glance at Spock, but the Vulcan waved the boy-slaves away and made no claim on McCoy.

Attendants had also bathed Arain and brought him wine. The even features were composed again, the flush of arousal fading, and he lay at ease, facing the audience, as if they, and not he, were the spectacle--or as if he had sensed something there more interesting than the bidding or the comments on his body. Spock's neighbors were congratulating themselves on discovering him.

"He cannot help but respond," said one "and there is no release for him by his own hand or any other's until his mate wills it. How he must burn, and still too proud to beg--" Arain's eyes paused on them and passed over Spock without recognition. McCoy fought a sense of unreality that he recognized as shock. But he had accepted his presence here, Spock's instability. He knew that he might, probably would, die when the Vulcan's control snapped. What could be worse than that?

Simple. Arain of the hundred encounters. If James Kirk did not know when to die, how should Leonard McCoy? He had been lonely through every relationship of life until two men of absolute integrity had admitted him to their friendship, and he had often felt that he could face any death in their company. Now all his surety was gone.

"Second bidding," called Tarsa.

Although the heat from Spock's body was radiating at fever pitch and his fist was clenched at his side until the tendons stood out in stark relief, he did not bid. McCoy didn't know whether this was cause for relief, that the Vulcan was still struggling for sanity, of if it was simply a prelude to a suicidal confrontation. There was nothing they could do that had a hope of success. Jim's life, obviously, depended upon his identity as Arain. There was a death sentence on the heads of any Enterprise officer taken in the Romulan Empire. The perfect conditioning of the slave trade had taken twenty pounds off Kirk, erased a few scars McCoy hadn't bothered with, let his hair grow. And something, whatever they had used on him to break him had wiped ten years of responsibility from his face. But he was recognizable, and eventually some of the Romulans he had confronted, either in treaty or deep space negotiations, would turn up here to claim their reward in the pleasure city. And as many or more knew Spock. By sheer chance none was in the audience tonight. But together? Human and Vulcan? They were legend, and his own presence would confirm it. If Spock stepped on that stage they were all dead men.

The bidding went higher this time, and it was the woman who finally flung a heavy purse to the guardian. Her slaves took her cloak and she stepped forward confidently, still masked and girdled in iridescent feathers. They ringed her eyes, following the contour of arched brow and high cheekbone into her upswept hair which was bound in feathers and jewels before it cascaded down her back. Bright eyefeathers with serpentine tendrils of down made a pectoral above her smooth breasts, a V of exotic color between her thighs, and from shoulder to finger tips she wore a perfect fan of wing. The room hushed as she stepped up to the stage.

A silent slave took Arain's cup, and he stared up, assessing her beauty as surely as she measured his.

"I do not own you, pet, but it would please me to do so--and I can give great pleasure to those who serve me well." She raised her arms, extending the wings, lifting her breasts and turning slightly before him, flexing her waist, showing the long line of hip and thigh. "There is much pleasure we could share."

As casually as if there were no threat of punishment, Arain reached out and pulled her foot from under her. She landed safe enough, flat on her ass on the bed, and a delighted roar went up around the room. Arain's expression had not changed. Hampered by her wings, she was awkward as she rose, but anger became her better than honeyed words.

"You are in a poor position to express an opinion, slave. You will regret that!"

She called for more chains, and the attendants brought them, heavy, gleaming gold, a hundredweight of massy links to bind him. Thorough, calculating, she looped them over chest, waist, belly, across his throat, around his thighs. The weight of the chains was accompanied by the soft caress of the feathers, bringing him fully hard and erect once more. She knelt over him, not touching him, shifting her weight from knee to knee, parted and open, but tantilizingly out of reach. She brushed his face with feathers, stroking his eyes, around his ears, along the line of lips and jaw until his